

face of the planet, which is a nation of immigrants.

For far too long, however, the need to reform our obsolete immigration system has been a low priority for the House leadership. It has been, essentially, on the back burner. Americans have said loud and clear that they want Congress to act on comprehensive immigration reform, and it doesn't seem to matter whom we talk to. For people on the left and the right, across the different regions of this country, the need for immigration reform is increasingly clear, not just because it reflects our values, but because many see it as in our vital economic interest that we reform our obsolete immigration policies and return to the values that made this country so great. It is that welcoming value, that value that says: Come here. Be a part of this Nation. Help grow it. Help build it, and help contribute to its productivity.

Last year, when immigration reform was, obviously, coming before us because so many Members were expressing the need for it, we heard the Speaker say that the Senate should act first and that he would await Senate action before bringing comprehensive immigration reform to the floor of the House of Representatives. Last year, the Senate acted. The Senate acted in a bipartisan fashion by a vote of 68-32 and passed comprehensive immigration reform. It was not a perfect piece of legislation—none of them are—but they passed comprehensive immigration reform, which is something that people in this country have been asking for for a long time.

But nothing. Nothing was brought to the House. In fact, while we had immigration reform ready to go—we have a bipartisan bill here in the House of Representatives—silence from the leadership on the Republican side.

Then earlier this year, in January, the Speaker said that, once he had been able to present to his Conference the principles by which the Republican Conference would pursue comprehensive immigration reform, we would be able to then turn to this question and move forward on what the American people have been asking for for a long time. That was in January. Next week, it is April, and the House and the American people still wait.

There is overwhelming support for comprehensive immigration reform. It comes from labor. It comes from our business community. It comes from the agriculture community. It is so rare that we have an issue like this that is number one fundamental to who we are as Americans, and it is so rare that we have an issue that unites the people who very often on this very floor have their differences manifest in the debates of Congress. Now we have an issue that is consistent with our history, that is consistent with our values, and that is supported by big and small businesses, by agriculture interests, by organized labor, by Democrats and Republicans.

It is long overdue. It is time for us to get about the business of the American people and to take immigration reform up now.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POLIS. I come before this body today, Madam Speaker, to address the urgent need for passing immigration reform and finally replacing our broken immigration system with one that secures the rule of law, that secures our Nation's borders, and that ensures that we fix this problem and issue going forward.

Look, nobody is happy with how things are today with regards to immigration. Why should we be? We should, in fact, be ashamed as a country to look ourselves in the face and say: We are a country in which we don't even know who is here. There could be 10 million people or 15 million people here illegally. We don't enforce the law at workplaces. There is no mandatory workplace authentication. We are not serious about border security. These are the things that the Senate bill and H.R. 15 would remedy.

We have an unprecedented level of investment in border security. We make sure that businesses verify every employee who goes to work in order to ensure that one is there legally to work. We make sure the people we need in our economy to work and have jobs are able to get the permission to go to work the next day. H.R. 15 would create over 150,000 jobs for American citizens. It would reduce our budget deficit by \$200 billion. It would secure our border, reflect our values as a nation of immigrants and as a nation of laws with an immigration system that makes sense for our country, that makes sense for American citizens, that makes sense for reducing our budget deficit, and that works—fundamentally works—to help make America more competitive.

That is why there is an unprecedented coalition around H.R. 15, our comprehensive bipartisan immigration reform bill. It is a coalition so strong that, if this bill were placed on the floor of the House tomorrow, it would pass.

It is a coalition that unites business and labor, a coalition that unites the agriculture industry with farmers and with farmworkers, a coalition that includes members of the faith-based community, from the evangelical traditions, to the Catholic tradition, to the Jewish tradition, to the Muslim tradition. The full diversity of faith in our country supports this bill and this approach to immigration reform.

It is a coalition that includes the technology community and that includes the innovators of tomorrow's economy. H.R. 15 includes entrepreneurship visas. It includes a route where high-skilled workers who are

trained at our universities with Ph.D.'s in engineering and math are able to stay in our country to deploy their talents here rather than our route of current dysfunction of an immigration system that forces them back to overseas countries where the jobs follow them.

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We want that talent here to make our country stronger. H.R. 15 does that.

We call upon the Speaker to move forward with bringing this bill to the floor. There has not been a single immigration bill considered by this House, and that is why moments from now my colleagues will be launching a discharge petition to bring H.R. 15, immigration reform, to the floor of this House.

Madam Speaker, you may ask, What is a discharge petition?

A discharge petition is a way that the membership of this body, the 435 fine men and women who make up the United States Congress, can go around a Speaker who is unwilling to schedule a bill for a vote, and we ourselves can schedule the bill for a vote.

Normally, the Speaker decides what bills are considered on this floor. But if 218 of 435 Members—that is half of this body, a majority of this body—sign a discharge petition, that bill will immediately come to the floor of the House for an up-or-down vote. And that is all we are asking, Madam Speaker.

We know that there are people in this body who might have heartfelt convictions against fixing our immigration system. They can vote their conscience, just as we vote ours. But when we have a majority of this body ready to act in concert with the Senate, in concert with the President, in harmony with over 75 percent of the American people who support fixing our immigration system, it is time to act.

No Speaker, no majority leader, should stand in the way of overwhelming opinion both inside this body and outside this body. The time for finally fixing our broken immigration system, replacing chaos with order, replacing unruliness with the rule of law, replacing a lack of certainty with security and certainty, and an investment in our future, is now.

I call upon all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, in the face of the failure of this body to act, to sign the discharge petition, take back control of this Chamber for a solid, commonsense majority of Democrats and Republicans who want immigration reform to pass now. We can do that simply by signing on the dotted line on the discharge petition, as I intend to do moments from now.

I call upon all my colleagues to sign the discharge petition and finally fix our broken immigration system.

BUILDING FUTURES RHODE ISLAND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from